

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 70:1

January 2006

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We apologize for publication delays in recent years. We assure you that all overdue issues are in process and will be mailed as each is printed. We plan to be back on our normal quarterly publication schedule by January 2008. Thank you for your patience! The Editors

Walk This Way: A Theme from Proverbs Reflected and Extended in Paul's Letters

Andrew E. Steinmann and Michael Eschelbach

Any figure of speech used with great frequency tends to desensitize readers to the dynamic and vivid associations that make it a useful way of explaining the abstract by means of the concrete. This is no less true for readers and hearers of the Scriptures. One figure of speech so common in the Scriptures that it is easily overlooked is the comparison of the sanctified life of a child of God to walking a path. The metaphorical association for the words *road*, *path*, and *walk* with the conduct of one's life is so common in some parts of the Scriptures that many translations in many passages have eliminated the metaphorical language altogether. This not only eradicates the power of the metaphor, but it also deprives the reader of vital connections between passages that make use of it elsewhere.

There are two places in the Scriptures where language about what we will call *the Walk* is used with significant repetition: Proverbs and the letters of Paul. It is our contention that Paul is actually borrowing much of his concept of the Walk from themes appearing in the Old Testament and articulated most clearly in the book of Proverbs. In addition, he extends many of the concepts in Proverbs to apply them to the Christian's life as lived in Christ, who redeemed his people. There is one significant difference between Proverbs and Paul: Paul seldom uses ὁδός as a metaphor for the manner in which one lives one's life. Instead, he prefers the verb περιπατέω. Proverbs, however, frequently uses words for road, path, street, or the like in a metaphorical manner. Proverbs, moreover, employs the verb הָלַךְ frequently in a metaphorical manner to describe the Walk. Thus, Paul seems to be borrowing the image of the Walk from Proverbs by specifically choosing the verbal instead of the nominal associations while assuming the entire image as handed down through the scriptural tradition he received.

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What is the difference between Proverbs' preference for the noun and Paul's for the verb? Is it simply a personal preference? A careful study of the use of the Walk in both Proverbs and Paul suggests that this is not simply a personal preference. Although Paul does not often use words connected with the Walk drawn directly from Proverbs, he is quite familiar with the themes developed in Proverbs, employing them carefully to delineate his view of the Walk for Christians.

Along with this continuity with Proverbs, there is also some distinction in Paul's discussion of this walk due to the coming of Christ into the world and the redemption he wrought. Christ is the way talked about in Proverbs, and Paul urges Christians to walk on the way that is Christ. Moreover, Paul urges his readers to emulate Christ as they see the apostolic example of Christ's chosen ambassadors. As an apostle of Christ, Paul seeks to model the Walk in a way that points to Christ. Thus, it is always the infinite richness and power of the gospel that propels the Walk while at the same time clarifying the way, which is Jesus himself.

Let us then turn to the specifics about the Walk in Proverbs and Paul to see how they reinforce each other and point to Jesus as the source and goal of the Christian's walk.

I. The Walk in Proverbs

Nouns for Way, Path, or Road as a Metaphor

Eighty-two of the 915 verses in Proverbs use the nouns for way, path, or road. Nearly all of the occurrences of these words are employed in this metaphor, which we will call "the metaphor of the path."¹ The nouns and their use in Proverbs as compared to the rest of the Old Testament are:

Noun	Meaning	Proverbs	OT	% in Proverbs
דָרֶךְ	path, course	19	62	31%
דֶרֶךְ	way, road, street, trip	75	706	11%
דְרֹמֹת	highway	1	27	3%
מִסְלָל	pathway	7	16	44%
דֶרֶשׁ	path, pathway, road	6	21	29%

¹ Only a few occurrences could arguably be excluded since they do not directly use these words to describe the conduct of one's life (Prov 7:8, 19; 17:23).

All of these nouns occur more often in Proverbs than in the rest of the Old Testament as a whole.² The most common noun used in the metaphor of the path, דָרֶךְ, is more frequently used in Proverbs than any other book of the Old Testament.³ Clearly, the metaphor of the path is an important figure of speech in Proverbs. This is especially true of the Solomonic sections of the book.⁴ The five nouns used in the metaphor are used in only five verses outside the sections attributed to Solomon,⁵ but in seventy-eight verses in the sections attributed to Solomon.⁶ Therefore, this metaphor is especially important to Solomon's wisdom, and most prominent in Proverbs 1:1-22:16, the first two Solomonic portions of Proverbs.⁷ By means of this metaphor Solomon expresses a balance of law and gospel in his sayings.

The Wrong Path

When treating the law, Solomon shows the negative implications of sinful paths. This path is characterized as evil, crooked, devious and wandering, dark, leading to death and Sheol, disgusting to Yahweh, and full of thorns and snares.⁸ Those who frequent these paths are described as wicked and evil, arrogant, crooked, greedy, lazy, stupid, treacherous, violent, stubborn fools, those who speak perverse things, those who despise God, and those who abandon upright paths.⁹ This use of the metaphor of the path allows Solomon to use the law as a deterrent to sin, as when he speaks of the evil path as harmful, causing people to stumble, presenting danger, or leading them to death.¹⁰ This also allows Solomon to use the law to help others recognize their sin, subtly depicting one's own

² Proverbs contains 6967 Hebrew words (separately written vocables). The OT contains 308,678 Hebrew words. Thus, Proverbs is 2.25% of the OT by word count. The one occurrence of דָרֶךְ is not statistically significant.

³ דָרֶךְ is used 107 times in Ezekiel, the only book where it is used more often than in Proverbs. However, since Ezekiel (18,912 words) is a much longer book than Proverbs (6967 words), דָרֶךְ is used with almost twice the frequency in Proverbs (1.08% of all words) than in Ezekiel (0.57% of all words).

⁴ Prov 1-9; 10:1-22:16; 25-29.

⁵ Prov 22:25; 23:19, 26; 30:19 (4 times), 30:20; 31:3.

⁶ These five nouns are used eight times in the non-Solomonic sections of Proverbs or in 0.67% of the 1183 words in those sections. These same nouns are used 100 times in the portions of the book attributed to Solomon or in 1.73% of the 5784 words in these sections.

⁷ The word דָרֶךְ is used five times in Prov 25-29 and the other nouns are not used at all. Unlike Solomon himself, the Hezekian editors of this section of Solomon's proverbs did not often include proverbs that used the metaphor of the way.

⁸ Prov 2:12, 13, 15, 18; 4:19, 5:6; 7:27; 8:13, 10:9; 14:2, 12; 15:9, 19, 16:25; 22:5.

⁹ Prov 1:19; 2:12, 13; 3:31; 4:14, 19; 8:13, 19; 12:15, 26; 13:15; 14:2; 15:9, 19; 16:29; 19:3.

¹⁰ Prov 1:19; 2:18; 4:19; 7:27; 15:19; 16:25; 21:16; 22:5.

sinful urges. Thus, 3:31 reminds readers of their own envy when it admonishes: "Do not envy a violent person, and do not choose any of his ways." And 10:9 moves those who consider it to look as their own secret sins when it says: "Whoever walks with integrity walks securely, but whoever is crooked in his ways will be found out." In addition, the adulteress is characterized in 5:6 as being on the evil path: "She does not consider the path of life. Her pathways wander. She does not realize it."

Those who think about these statements are led to consider times when they were like the adulteress. They, too, recall times when they did not consider the path of life, when they acted out of their sinful impulses. They also wandered and did not realize it at the time. In this way the warning about the adulteress is more than a warning about breaking the Sixth Commandment but is also a warning about the insidious nature of sin and the foolishness that the adulteress represents.

At times this accusing feature of the law is made explicit by contrasting sinful behavior to a better way or to God's way:

Go to the ant, lazybones. Observe its ways and become wise. (6:6)

Whoever walks with integrity walks securely, but whoever is crooked in his ways will be found out (10:9)

The way of a wicked person is a disgusting thing to Yahweh, but he loves those who pursue righteousness. (15:9)

A person considers his way pure, but Yahweh weighs motives. (16:2)

There is a way that appears to be correct to a person, but its end is the way of death. (16:25)

Occasionally the metaphor of the path is used to depict the law as a guide for those whom God grants life in the gospel:

Then you will understand righteousness, justice and uprightness: every good pathway. (2:9)

... because command is a lamp, and teaching is a light, and warnings coming from discipline are a road of life. (6:23)

The Right(eous) Path

In contrast to the evil path, the righteous path of the gospel does not originate from human impulses, but belongs to God, since his way is from eternity past (Prov 8:22; 10:29). The ability to walk on this path is a gift from God (Prov 3:6; 10:29). This path is the path of Christ, the Wisdom of God (Prov 3:17; 8:20). This godly path is characterized as straight and level, upright, having justice, possessing and leading to life, having righteousness, bringing peace, creating understanding, enabling wise

judgment, and having wisdom.¹¹ Since this path originates from God and is purely a gift of God, it is not a product of the human will (Prov 16:9; 20:24). Note the picturesque way in which the path of righteous people is depicted as coming to them without their aid and independent of their will, just like the rising of the sun:

But the path of righteous people is like the coming of the light of dawn and [like] light until day is established. (4:18)

Humans, however, can exercise the option to leave this path and are urged not to abandon it (Prov 2:13, 20; 10:17; 15:10).

Those who are on the godly path are accounted righteous, upright or good. Since they are empowered by the gospel, they practice discipline, are given insight, have integrity, are prudent, please God, and make their paths level.¹²

Solomon often uses the metaphor of the path as a means to make the promises of the gospel (both temporal and eternal) more vivid:

[Yahweh] is a shield for those who walk in integrity to protect the paths of justice. He guards the ways of his godly ones. (2:7-8)

Then you will walk safely on your way, and you will not stub your toe. (3:23)

The way of Yahweh is a fortress for the person of integrity... (10:29)

In the path of righteousness [there is] life, and the way of that pathway is not death. (12:28)

Righteousness guards a person of integrity's way... (13:6)

A path of life leads upward for those with insight, so that he may turn away from Sheol below. (15:24)

[When] a man's ways are pleasing things to Yahweh, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. (16:7)

Gray hair is a beautiful crown. It is found in the way of righteousness. (16:31)

Other times the metaphor of the path is used as the invitation of the gospel to repentance, faith, and trust:

¹¹ Prov 2:8, 19; 3:6, 17; 4:11, 26; 5:6; 6:23; 8:20; 9:6, 15; 10:17; 11:5; 12:28; 15:24; 16:31; 21:16.

¹² Prov 2:20; 4:18, 26; 10:17; 11:5, 20; 12:26; 13:6; 14:2, 8; 15:19, 24; 16:7, 17; 21:29.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (3:6)

Make level pathways for your feet, and all your ways will be secure. (4:26)

Abandon gullibility, and live. Travel the road to understanding (9:6)

Thus, the metaphor of the path is a constant and vivid figure of speech throughout Solomon's proverbs. It is Solomon's way of applying both law and gospel to bring others to the Wisdom of God, Christ, who leads them on the path of righteousness (Ps 23:3).

II. The Verb לָּךְ as a Metaphorical Reference to the Walk in Proverbs

The verb לָּךְ is used thirty-eight times in thirty-seven verses in Proverbs. Twenty of these verses and twenty-one occurrences of לָּךְ are unambiguous references to the Walk.¹³ Another six occurrences are closely related to the metaphor.¹⁴ Interestingly, all twenty-six of these verses occur in the Solomonic portions of Proverbs.¹⁵

Walking the Wrong Way

Only five passages in Proverbs use the Walk to speak of sinful conduct. The first occurrence is in a passage that speaks of the benefit of divine Wisdom, 2:10-15. This is the only of these passages to speak of the sinful Walk in general terms:

Wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Foresight will stand guard over you. Understanding will protect you to save you from the evil way, from the man who speaks perverse things, those who abandon upright paths to walk in the ways of darkness, those who enjoy doing evil (they rejoice in the perversity of evil), whose paths are crooked, and deviousness is in their pathway. (2:10-15)

Note that the opposite of an upright path is the way of darkness. This allows Solomon twice to contrast directly the upright way later in the book: "But the path of righteous people is like the coming¹⁶ of light of dawn and [like] light until day is established. The way of wicked people is like the dark. They never know what makes them stumble" (4:18-19).

¹³ 1:15; 2:7, 13, 20, 23; 3:28; 6:12; 8:20; 10:9 (twice); 11:13; 13:20; 14:2, 7; 15:12; 16:29; 19:1; 20:7, 19; 28:6, 18, 26.

¹⁴ 4:18; 6:22, 28; 7:22; 14:7; 15:12

¹⁵ לָּךְ is used twice outside the Solomonic sections of Proverbs: 23:31 and 30:29.

¹⁶ The word *coming* here is the Qal participle, masculine singular of בָּרַךְ , which creates another tie between this passage and 2:10-15.

Similarly, at 6:23 we are told: “because a command is a *lamp*, and teaching is a *light*, and warnings coming from discipline are a *road of life*.” The extension of the Walk by connecting it with darkness and light is not unique to Proverbs, but is found elsewhere in the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah.¹⁷ This use of darkness and light in connection with the Walk is also reflected in Paul’s thought in Romans 3:12 and Ephesians 5:8.

Other passages that speak of the sinful Walk highlight specific sinful behavior. One of these is 6:12-14: “A good-for-nothing individual, a sinful person—*walking* with a corrupt mouth, winking his eye, signaling [with] his foot, motioning [with] his fingers, perverse things in his heart plotting evil,—is always spreading conflict.” This verse emphasizes one particular aspect of the sinful Walk: deceit and duplicity. This specific aspect of the sinner’s Walk is denounced by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:2.

Closely related are other proverbs that speak of other sinful behaviors, including 11:13 and 20:19, both of which condemn sins against the Eighth Commandment:

Someone who *walks* about gossiping betrays a confidence, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a private matter confidential. (11:13)

Someone who reveals a confidence *walks* about spreading gossip, so do not get involved with a person whose lips are always open. (20:19)

Finally, one Proverb condemns enticing one’s neighbor to sin, causing him to walk on a harmful path: “A violent person entices his neighbor, and leads¹⁸ him on a way that is not good.” (15:29)

Walking the Right(eous) Way

The twenty-one verses that relate to the righteous Walk in Proverbs demonstrate a variety of ways of depicting God as the origin and source of the righteousness. The most common phrase associated with the righteous Walk is walking with integrity, combining 𐤇 with 𐤅 , most often connected with the preposition 𐤃 .

He [Yahweh] reserves sound judgment for upright people. [He is] a shield for those who *walk in integrity* to protect the paths of justice. He guards the ways of his godly ones. Then you will understand righteousness, justice and uprightness: every good pathway. (2:7-9)

Whoever *walks with integrity* walks securely, but whoever is crooked in his ways will be found out. (10:9)

¹⁷ Job 29:3; Ps 56:14, 89:16; Isa 2:5, 9:2; 42:16; 59:9; Lam 3:2.

¹⁸ Hiphil perfect from the root 𐤇 .

Better to be a poor person *walking in his integrity* than have crooked lips and be a fool. (19:1)

A righteous person *walks*¹⁹ *in his integrity*. Blessed are his children after him. (20:7)

Better to be a poor person *walking in his integrity* than have twisted ways and be rich. (28:6)

A person who *walks with integrity* will be safe, but a person whose ways are crooked will fall all at once. (28:18)

A synonymous concept, “walking in uprightness,” is used once: “The person who *walks in uprightness* fears Yahweh, but the one whose ways are devious despises him” (14:2).

These sayings either connect the Walk in integrity with positive concepts, especially righteousness (but also uprightness and justice; Prov 2:7–9; 20:7), or contrast it with what is crooked or twisted.²⁰ The contrast is perhaps the most definitive statement of what integrity means, since the positive concepts are associated with other Walk passages, whereas the contrast to crooked or twisted is only used in proverbs that speak of walking with integrity. Thus, the extension of the metaphorical Walk by the addition of integrity implies that the conduct of God’s people is aligned with His will and is not misshapen in God’s sight. As we will see, this same concept of a misshapen life appears in Paul through the use of περιπατέω connected to a negatively charged word through the use of the preposition κατά. One proverb connects wisdom with the Walk by the use of the preposition כִּי: “A person who trusts his own thoughts is a fool, but a person who *walks in wisdom* will be kept safe” (28:26).

This is the only other proverb that connects an abstract concept with the verb הִלְכָה through the use of the preposition כִּי. Since it comes at the end of a section that uses three proverbs with the הִלְכָה plus כִּי construction (cf. 28:6, 20), it is reasonable to assume that wisdom is associated with integrity while crookedness is associated with trust in one’s own thoughts. Clearly, if trust in one’s own thoughts leads to a sinful Walk, the righteous Walk derives from God, and not from human effort or thought.

The association of the Walk with wisdom is found in one other passage in Proverbs: “I [wisdom] *walk* on the path of righteousness, upon the

¹⁹ Note the use of a Hithpael form of הִלְכָה. With this verb the Hithpael stem emphasizes repeated or habitual action.

²⁰ Piel participle of הִלְכָה; 10:9, 19:1, 28:6, 18. Note that 14:2 not only uses a synonym for integrity (uprightness), but also uses a synonym of הִלְכָה, הִלְךְ.

pathway of justice" (8:20). Here, wisdom is connected with the Walk and coordinated with righteousness and justice, confirming the connection of wisdom with integrity, since these are connected with integrity in the passages examined earlier. Elsewhere Proverbs urges the righteous Walk by encouraging a Walk that seeks wisdom:

The person who walks with wise people becomes wise, but a companion of fools will be harmed. (13:20)

Get away²¹ from a foolish person, since you cannot acquire knowledge from [his] lips. (14:7)

Finally, it should be noted that 3:21–35 connects the righteous Walk as enabled, guided, directed, and protected by God himself.

My son, do not take your eyes off them. Guard sound judgment and foresight. They will be life for you and favor around your neck. Then you will walk safely on your way, and you will not stub your toe. When you lie down, you will not be afraid. When you lie there, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the destruction of wicked people when it comes. Yahweh will be your confidence. He will keep your foot from being caught.

Summary of the Walk in Proverbs

According to Proverbs, everyone has a Walk. It may be the wrong Walk characterized as spiritual darkness and deriving from human desires beset with sin. Or, it may be the righteous Walk characterized as lighted by God and deriving from divine favor that grants integrity and wisdom, so that like Enoch or Noah, a person can "walk with God" (Gen 5:22, 24; 6:9). Let us now turn to the writings of Paul to examine how the Walk found in the OT, especially in Proverbs, is developed in light of the gospel as revealed in Christ.

III. "Walking" in Paul's Epistles

To this point we have seen three basic things. First, English translations too frequently ignore the significance of *path/walk* language. Second, Paul borrows the language of Proverbs with a shift from noun forms to verb forms. Third, significant repetition of these terms in Proverbs and Paul occur in positive and negative language. This half of the paper will build on these points as it focuses on Paul's use of this language.

²¹ Qal imperative of לָמַד .

Translation and Terms

The King James Version, except in two instances, translates περιπατέω as “walk,” and never translates it as “live.” In stark contrast to this, the New International Version *never* translates περιπατέω as “walk” and in nineteen of the thirty-two times Paul uses the term, the NIV translates it simply as “live.”²² Consider, furthermore, the occurrence of the following words:

περιπατέω (walk)	95 times	(32 in Johannine writings, 32 in Paul)
(imperative)	14 times	(4 impv in John, 6 impv in Paul)
δός (way)	101 times	(6 in Johannine writings, 6 in Paul)
ζάω (live)	140 times	(never an imperative)
βίωω (live)	1 time	(not an imperative)

The frequency of these terms indicates that the New Testament has two words that mean “live” and uses one of the terms with great frequency. If Paul wanted to signify “live” he certainly knew how (indeed, Paul uses the term fifty-nine times). Paul clearly intends to signify “walk” as he uses the term a full one-third of the times it occurs in the New Testament. The term *walk* in comparison to the term *live* focuses on activity and movement, which suggests purpose and destination. The purpose and destination have been described in the first half of this paper, the focus on activity and movement is provided by Paul.

A Context for Paul's Walk Language

As noted at the start of this study and immediately above, Paul uses *walk* language frequently but seldom uses *way* language.²³ The Old Testament, including Proverbs, is the natural source from which Paul drew this walk language.²⁴ What, then, is the historical context for Paul's use of this language? There is a good probability that Paul is writing in light of his rabbinic training with Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and his encounter with Judaizers in the church, both of whom emphasized *halakah*, namely the interpretation of the Old Testament as a legal guide for the daily walk of the righteous Jew.²⁵ In light of Paul's background as a Pharisee (Phil 3:4-7),

²² The ESV translates περιπατέω as *walk* in all but eleven instances.

²³ Some early Christian writings identify Jesus as “the Way” (John 14:4, 6) and affirm that “the Way” was a label for the early Christian church (Acts 9:2).

²⁴ This basic observation, however, may be lost to readers when “walk” is not regularly used to translate περιπατέω in some English translations of Paul's Epistles (e.g., the NIV).

²⁵ There are two basic types of rabbinic interpretation, *halakah* (exegesis that legislated daily life) and *haggadah* (non-legal exegesis based upon narrative stories or examples);

he had probably frequently heard imperatives in his pre-conversion life related to walking according to the law. Such a walk according to the law was seen by some Jews as essential to maintaining one's righteous status before God in the covenant.²⁶ After his conversion, and in contrast to this understanding, Paul proclaimed Christ as the Righteousness of God (Rom 1:17) who has fulfilled the law (Rom 10:4) and gives us his righteousness by grace through faith (Rom 3:22-26). When speaking of sanctification in light of Christ's fulfillment of the law, therefore, Paul does not call Christians to "walk by the law." He instead uses walk language with a variety of other prepositional phrases (e.g., "walk by the Spirit" Gal 5:16, 25), as will be demonstrated below.

IV. "Walk this Way" in Positive Terms in Paul

The first two positive uses of the term *walk* address the question of origin or power. Who is the person that walks the path intended by God? What is the origin of such a person? Three instances speak of walking "according to," "by," or "in" the Spirit—two speak of love and one speaks of faith.²⁷ Regarding the origin of one who walks this way, as the Son of God became man through the agency of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), so Christians are regenerated by the Spirit's activity through the gospel. Notice how Paul links the concepts of love, Spirit, and regeneration in Titus 3:4-8a, "But when the . . . love of God our savior appeared . . . he saved us through the washing of *regeneration* and renewing of the *Holy Spirit* whom he poured out on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ* our Savior."

Second, regarding the ability to maintain this walk, it is the Holy Spirit who provides the power and continued orientation. It is the Spirit who makes the love of Christ known through the God-breathed Scriptures and who further provides a living faith to walk in this same way (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 10:17). Not surprisingly then, in 2 Corinthians 5 we find the declaration of how Christians walk, "by faith" (not an imperative), surrounded by an abundant articulation of the activity of God for his people: "Now he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee." "For the love of Christ holds us together . . . therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:5, 14, 17).

see *The Literature of the Sages: Part 1, Oral Torah, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, ed. S. Safrai (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 121-209.

²⁶ See Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002).

²⁷ The Spirit: Rom 8.4, Gal 5.16, 2 Cor 12.18; Love: Eph 5.2, Rom 14.15; Faith: 2 Cor 5:7.

Walking Worthy

The next collection of positive statements about walking is tied to the word *worthy*. In Ephesians 4:1 Paul exhorts the Christians to walk “worthy of the calling with which they were called.” Colossians 1:10 uses the language “worthy of the Lord” and 1 Thessalonians 2:12 states “worthy of God.” The connection with the term *worthy* builds upon and confirms the preceding discussion about this walk being the product of divine, not human, activity. The term *worthy* may easily be misunderstood to mean “deserving of” in common usage. In popular literature or media one person says to the other: “I’ll try to be worthy of you.” This means: I will work hard and try hard to do everything right so that I deserve you. This sense of deserving something better by working harder is not what *worthy* (ἀξίος) signifies in the New Testament; on the contrary, there it means to act in a way that is consistent with a preexisting standard. (It is similar to *walking in integrity* in Proverbs.) Thus, Paul said in Ephesians 4 that Christians already have a calling with which they were called. Considering the discussion above about regeneration, this calling includes being called into existence as a new creation (1 Cor 1:28; 2 Cor 5:17). This new creation, now generated by and oriented toward its creator, responds readily and positively just as God’s creation responds to his commands (note for example Jesus’ demonstration of power over nature in the Gospels). Similarly, a walk worthy of the Lord is not urging movement toward a god who is distant from us because he is perfect and we are not. Rather, to walk worthy of the Lord is to realize that the Lord is our origin and means of propulsion in a path that he has prepared for us (Eph 2:10). Notice that Paul’s language reveals a freedom to concentrate on the Walk rather than the path since the path is well articulated in Proverbs and well established by Christ himself.

Walking in . . .

The last set of positive statements is connected to the preposition *in* (ἐν) or could be classified as aspects of good works in which Christians are to walk. The overarching locus of the Christian walk is “in him” (Eph 5:8; Col 2:6). Since all the fullness of the godhead dwells in Christ as in a body all other characteristics of this location are included in this pronoun referring to Christ (Col 2:9). The imperative that invites us to walk in him becomes concrete rather than abstract when we remember the inseparability of Christ from his word. Walking in Christ is not some ethereal romantic notion of spiritual traction. Walking in Christ means to walk by the power and according to the direction of his inspired word: “if you remain in my word you are my disciples indeed and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31). Paul echoes the words of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 regarding the gospel, “which I preached to you, which

also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast”

Walking in Wisdom

Paul specifies four characteristics or sub-categories of Christ that further clarify the Christian walk. First, Paul speaks of walking in wisdom (Col 4:5).²⁸ The connection to Proverbs in general and Proverbs 8 in particular is obvious. Walking in wisdom toward those who are outside reminds the Christians of all the warnings and good counsel that Proverbs provides. For example, Proverbs 12:26 reminds the faithful person to choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked will lead him astray. Paul reflects that advice in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good morals.’” However, wisdom toward those outside has more in view than simply friendships. Paul had already corrected the supposition that being faithful to God meant having nothing to do with anyone who was unfaithful (1 Cor 5:9–11). Christians actively engage the world with good words and works just as Christ did. Yet, they are careful not to form ties with the world or the worldly that would draw them away from Christ. Thus Paul explains that Christians refuse to take on the ways of the world while at the same time becoming all things to all men that some may be saved (1 Cor 5:9–11). Similarly he warns us neither to become unequally yoked with unbelievers nor to remain yoked with unbelievers unless a preexisting relationship in which we find ourselves has potential to lead the unbeliever to Christ (2 Cor 6:14; 1 Cor 7:12–16).

Another aspect of wisdom addresses the source of power and purpose for this wise walk. Walking wisely means maintaining a source of power for the Walk. The wisdom of the world calculates how it walks on the basis of potential for personal profit at the expense of others. This makes worldly relationships selfish and vulnerable at the same time. Selfishness is folly because it means devoting one’s life to satisfying a human nature that cannot be satisfied. A selfish walk is vulnerable because the people around us are bound to fall short of our expectations at some point and because they are themselves competing with us to fulfill their own desires. Love determined the path Jesus walked; it was never dictated by the sinful desires of those he served. Christ is love and so never failed to love the loveless. Christians would be foolish to attempt a loving walk toward the world around them apart from that same love of Christ.

²⁸ In Eph 5:15 Paul also mentions wisdom as an aspect of walking circumspectly.

Walking in Love

Second, Paul speaks of walking in love (Eph 5:2).²⁹ Love, in view of the above discussion regarding wisdom, is what defines, motivates, and makes the Walk invulnerable. In Romans 13:9b-10 Paul summarizes all of the instruction regarding the path in Proverbs under the heading of love, “. . . all [the commandments] are summed up in this saying, namely ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does a neighbor no harm; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Love motivates one’s life of service to others, always according to God’s will that they should live according to his design in creation and trusting in his redemption in Christ. With the path of love already assumed from Proverbs and summarized by love, Paul emphasizes Christ’s love as the power that puts the Walk in motion. Christ has loved us and given himself for us (Eph 5:2). This is the indicative that fuels the imperative that precedes it: “walk in love.” Paul further articulates the power or force of this love in two places. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Paul explains that Christ died so that those who live should live no longer for themselves but for him who died for them and rose again. Paul does not mean the phrase “should . . . no longer” in the sense of ought not but in the sense of need not. Christ has provided and will provide for every need of the Christian. Paul says these exact words: “All things are yours” (1 Cor 3:21). In the absence of necessity and the presence of infinite providence, the Christian spirit walks lovingly toward those outside. Thus, the Walk in love is invulnerable because it needs nothing and seeks nothing for itself from its object. The love of Christ fuels the Walk of Christian love toward others, whether they respond in faith or in hostility.³⁰

Walking in Newness of Life

Third, the Christian walks in newness of life (Rom 6:4). Again, Paul has both origin and power in view. As new creations, Christians walk with a new and different orientation. We have died to the futility of a self-centered walk because we have been convicted of its folly.³¹ We have been raised by and into the genius of the author of life; that life is found in God’s providing for us that we might provide for others.³²

²⁹ In Romans 14:15 Paul speaks of walking “according to love.”

³⁰ So Paul assessed his own walk and experience in the world, Phil 4:10-13.

³¹ Rom 6:21: “What fruit, then, did you have of the things of which you are now ashamed?”

³² Rom 6:13: “present yourselves as being alive . . . and your members as instruments of righteousness.”

Walking in Good Works

Finally, a walk in good works flows out of the newness of life, “. . . for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared in advance that we might walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Notice that the workmanship or creative activity of God comes first. The works themselves that God would have the Christian accomplish are also prepared in advance. God’s creation and preparation is what activates the Christian walk. Notice also that Paul does not offer any further description of these good works that God has prepared (the path itself). Under this heading are included five other terms (six references) related to walking in Paul. While these references all relate to good works, none of them actually specify the activity but assume the reader’s familiarity with the Old Testament and the ministry of Christ.

First, Paul speaks of walking in a way that pleases God (*ἀρέσκω*, 1 Thess 4:1). Pleasing God is not a trivial matter of cozying up to God by doing what he fancies. What pleases God is integrally related to his design in creation and his will that we should live and not die (Ezek 18:32). What pleases God is the kind of walk by which everyone is helped.³³

Second, Paul speaks of walking properly (*εὐσχημόνως*, 1 Thess 4:12). Here Paul offers some specific direction regarding the Walk that brings many passages in Proverbs to mind. Compare Paul’s injunctions about working with your own hands to Proverbs’ warning about laziness.³⁴ Or, compare minding your own business and leading a quiet life to Proverbs’ warning of meddling in other’s business or provoking a neighbor.³⁵ Yet, Paul does not lose his focus on the principle: the Christian’s relation to those outside the faith. Paul maintains his concern that the Christian walk is consistent with (i.e., worthy of) that of the Christ. Christians mind their own business and do so quietly so as not to draw attention to themselves but to Christ (Isa 42:2). By minding their own business, Christians are able to provide not only for themselves but also for the needs of others (Eph 4:28). In this way the theology of Christ becomes the reality of the Christian; God has given ability and means for serving productively, this service is productive, which allows the Christian to share with those who are in need. How could a Christian speak of God’s providence while constantly depending upon the support of society? How could a Christian

³³ For example, it pleased God to save Paul from himself and to use Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles that they might be saved, Gal 1:15–16.

³⁴ E.g., Eph 4:28, 1 Thess 4:11 compared with Prov 26:13–16.

³⁵ E.g., 1 Thess 4:11 compared with Prov 26:17–19. Note how Paul’s progression of thought in Thessalonians matches that of Proverbs 26:13–19.

demonstrate the riches of God's will for people while his disciples seek only to be served by those around them?

Paul uses this same thought in Romans 13:13. As in 1 Thessalonians, Paul provides a few specifics that echo Proverbs in three sets of paired terms: one set dealing with drunkenness, one with sexual immorality, and one with jealousy. All three of these issues are found prominently and often in Proverbs. Notice that the context of Romans 13 is the same as that of Thessalonians: concern for others, including those outside the faith. Drunkenness undermines one's ability to serve others and makes the drunk a burden instead of a blessing. Sexual immorality defrauds both women and the men who bear responsibility for them of any positive consequences of sexual intimacy (1 Thess 4:3-6). Jealousy exalts one's own ambitions over love for one's neighbor. In contrast, a Christian walk is characterized by the fact that one is well provided for by God and, in turn, is oriented toward providing for others.

Third, Paul speaks of walking circumspectly (*ἀκριβῶς*, Eph 5:15). The connection with Proverbs is immediate as Paul clarifies: "not as unwise but as wise." Circumspection takes into account the importance and consequence of the Walk. For example, children might play games on the lines painted in parking lots, running, skipping, hopping, even walking with their eyes closed and with little regard for stepping off the line. However, walking a beam of the same width on a skyscraper under construction is another matter. Ironworkers walk circumspectly because there is much at stake, and mistakes are irreversible. So Paul explains in this context that Christians are redeeming the time because the days are evil. There is no time for a careless walk. Every step must be taken as carefully and circumspectly as possible, for the future of one's neighbor, including those not yet in the faith, depends on it.

Fourth, Paul refers to the example of the apostles, chiefly his own example (Phil 3:17). The most important aspect of the apostles' walk is not the tireless, intensely focused labor to advance the word of God, though this is important (Acts 6:4, 1 Thess 2:9). The most important aspect of the apostles' walk is its origin. The original apostles were captive to fear and confusion until Pentecost. Paul was an enemy of the gospel until Ananias announced God's grace and baptized him. Thus it is always the infinite richness and power of the gospel that propels the Walk while at the same time clarifying the path.

Fifth, Paul makes the Walk comprehensive of the Christian life by adding: "in whatever calling you are" (1 Cor 7:17). Here Paul confronts the thinking that a Christian must walk away from the world and even away from their vocation, family, or even spouse. The Christian walk is indeed

counter-cultural, but it is still a walk through every culture in every place of every time. A Christian walk transcends temporal, physical concerns yet remains a walk that takes place through a physical body in a physical world. It is the varied circumstances of the Christian that makes it possible for the Christian's walk to bring them into contact with and service to those that God would still reach. While the Christian's focus and perception may always be more acutely attuned to eternal, spiritual goals, these goals are approached in the context of a real physical world of present challenges and needs.

V. "Walk this Way" in Negative Terms in Paul

Paul speaks of the Christian's walk under four negative categories. First, Paul speaks of "walking according to [κατά] . . ." Paul condemns a walk that is according to "a man," according to "the flesh," and according to "this age" (1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 10:2; Eph 2:2). The relationship between these three as speaking of the ongoing struggle against the sinful condition is evident.³⁶ Paul begins 1 Corinthians 3:3 by complaining that the Corinthians are carnal or fleshly (σαρκικοί). Paul's evidence for this is that they are jealous and envious. *Fleshly* is the same term used in 2 Corinthians 10:2. A further explanation for why such a walk exists among God's people is provided in Ephesians 2:2 where the course of this world defines the Walk of the flesh and behind both stand the "prince of the power of the air who now works in the sons of disobedience." Not surprisingly, in the very next verse Paul exposes the flesh as the place where all this negative motivation coalesces. Thus, when the word *walk* is used in connection with the phrase "according to" the contrast is between Spirit and flesh. Paul described those fundamental opposing forces in his earliest letter, Galatians: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh . . . for these are contrary to each other" (Gal 5:16). Paul also articulates the fundamental difference between these two different walks as he notes that the Walk of the flesh is the product of human effort ("the works of the flesh are . . .") while the Walk of the Spirit is the product of Holy Spirit ("the fruit of the Spirit is . . .").

Second, Paul speaks in two places of walking in something (ἐν). In 2 Corinthians 4:2 Paul rejects walking in craftiness (πανουργία), and in Ephesians 4:17 he speaks of no longer walking like the Gentiles in the futility (ματαιότητι) of their thoughts. These are two related statements

³⁶ For further discussion of Paul's understanding of the sinful condition, see Charles A. Gieschen, "Original Sin in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 31 (2005): 365-374.

because each person's walk takes place before God in his creation.³⁷ There is no cunning way to beat the system, to contradict God's law and design and thereby to prosper eternally. As Paul explained to the Romans: "For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law" (Rom 2:12). Paul is clearly speaking from the kind of conviction that Proverbs creates as it consistently reminds the reader that there is no escaping the consequences of one's actions, for example "Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned" (Prov 6:27)? Warnings about walking in craftiness and futility have their contrast in the positive injunctions to walk worthy of the Lord and his calling. That is, Christians are to walk in a way that is consistent with the design and intent of the creator and redeemer. The way or walk of the Lord that accomplished both our creation and redemption is the way or walk he continues in the life of his children.

Third, Paul warns with "walking as . . ." language in three places.³⁸ Paul laments that many walk as "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil 3:18). He reminds the Colossians that they once walked as "sons of disobedience," and warns the Ephesians not to walk as fools (υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας, Col 3:6-8; Eph 5:15). Psalm 53:1 makes clear that in biblical thought the word *fool* referred to a person who denied by his walk that there was the living God. An adamant denial of God is evident in the fact that he will not be persuaded (ἀπειθέω). Having denied God, the fool replaces the Walk intended by the creator of life with his own walk: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes," and "There is a way that seems right to man but its end is the way of death" (Prov 12:15, 14:12).

Yet denying God is not sufficient for the disobedient; they become enemies of that which most clearly expresses the nature of God and exposes the folly of men, the cross of Christ. Thus Paul speaks at length of human opposition to God's means of accomplishing our salvation by sacrificing himself (1 Cor 1:18-31). No human caught up in sin would make such a sacrifice, and no human enslaved by sin can tolerate this, since sin convinces (πειθέω) us that sacrificing others for our own comfort makes the most sense. The Walk of faith contradicts all human thought because it is the product of divine regeneration and animated by the Holy Spirit through the inexhaustible means of grace.

Finally, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians twice not to walk in a disorderly manner (ἀτάκτως, 2 Thess 3:6,11). Paul provides a more specific meaning

³⁷ Prov 5:21 "For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord . . . His own iniquities entrap the wicked man and he is caught in his own sin."

³⁸ Either stated expressly with ὡς or implied.

for the term positively and negatively. In 2 Thess 3:6, he contrasts the disorderly walk with the tradition received from the apostolic company (Phil 3:17). In 2 Thess 3:11, Paul clarifies the negative aspect with the words: "not working at all." The Christian walk is one that is directed and empowered by God so that the one walking might communicate this providence of God in service to others. One who does not walk this way offers nothing to others except the burden of his own self-indulgence.

VI. Conclusion

Paul, like Proverbs, has spoken at length about the productive walk of the faithful in contrast to the destructive ways of the faithless. The way in Proverbs becomes the walk in Paul, because in Christ's suffering and death the one who is "the Way" gives his people the power to walk, guides them on his path, and leads them to his righteousness.

In Proverbs God's Old Testament people were taught that the righteous path belonged to God. There the path was used to make the promises of God more vivid and invite readers to faith and the subsequent sanctified walk before God in righteousness and purity. While the Walk is also used in Proverbs in passages designed to be a deterrent to sin (first use of the law), a reading of Proverbs that sees only such passages and ignores the invitation of God to life through Christ, the Wisdom of God, is pointless moralizing. Instead, a comprehensive reading of the Walk in Proverbs reveals that it prepared God's ancient people for the coming of the Savior by inviting them to believe the gospel, which is God's power that enables them to walk the sanctified path of life.

Paul expands on the concepts connected to the Walk in Proverbs by explaining them in light of the ministry of Christ to save sinners. Paul assumes that his readers know that the path is Christ himself. Therefore, to walk in the path is to walk in Christ, to walk in love as Christ loved them, to walk in newness of life that Christians have in their risen Lord, to walk in good works that Christ has prepared for them. While not directly referring to Proverbs, Paul in essence invites his readers to ponder those ancient wisdom sayings as he expounds on what it means to walk in a way that pleases the Lord, to walk properly, and to walk circumspectly. Like Proverbs, Paul, too, can speak about the walk in negative terms, employing the first use of the law. However, like Proverbs, Paul is not simply moralizing but constantly understands the difference between the world's walk according to the flesh and the Christian's walk in Christ, the path of life.

In the light of Christ, the Walk is illuminated, and those who walk on it do so because of the gospel. This was true already for the Walk in

Proverbs. Yet with the coming of Christ in the flesh, Paul is able to explain the full implications that were latent in Proverbs' words. For him the Walk is now available to everyone who believes in Christ because we now have the mystery of God revealed in Jesus, who is himself the Way.